

HIS5110 // History Museum Exhibits I

FALL 2015 – Tuesdays, 1:00 to 3:30
Coleman Hall, 1166

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Office Hours: MW, 9:00-10:30, T, 4:00-5:00
or by appointment

CATALOG ENTRY:

While studying the role, function, and development of history museum exhibits as part of its interpretation for public audiences, the students will plan, research and design an exhibition in collaboration with a local museum using standards and best practices of the museum profession.

3.000 Credit hours

CLASS GOALS:

- Develop, mount, program, and evaluate an exhibition, “Made In Illinois” (working title) in collaboration with the Tarble Arts Center
- Study the theory and practice of museum exhibition, and about these ideas in application
- Generate a multimedia record of the preparation and execution of this exhibition
- Prepare thoughtful museum practitioners who can apply the knowledge and skills from this class to a wide variety of history exhibition contexts

This is a two-semester course. In the Fall semester, we will be concentrating on theory and practice, while the Spring will focus on application of these ideas as we put together our own exhibition.

SKILLS:

This class will require and encourage the cultivation of skills and qualities, both inside and outside of the purview of ‘ordinary’ academic work, that are very valuable to emerging public history and exhibition practitioners.

●Research: You will need to research exhibit topic and themes, building upon research skills developed in other courses within the Historical Administration curriculum. You will also learn to complete audience research, as well as become comfortable with finding the answers to any questions that might come up in the course of exhibition planning and development; whether it is how to format a particular document, how to identify and use a digital platform, or how to use an unexpected but necessary technique.

●Writing: Museum and exhibition work requires very strong writing skills. The foundation of these skills is the academic paper, but we will be doing other kinds of writing as well: blog and online writing for a wide audience, professional memo writing, brief and report writing, and label writing.

●Presentation: Public history is all about communication and interpretation, so you will practice presenting your ideas and projects often, so that you become comfortable with professional-level communication and presentation—both prepared and ad hoc.

●Initiative: Exhibitions are both highly collaborative and highly unpredictable—for that reason, it is difficult to anticipate both the nature and the timing of the tasks that will arise, as well as to render individual assessment for group efforts. I have made every effort to account for all parts of our exhibition in the framework of this course, but it is also true that as the exhibition develops and takes shape, new efforts will be necessary. I have attempted to build the need for spur-of-the-moment initiative in our grading rubric, but it is also true that in its final form, this exhibition will be what you make of it.

●Creativity: This is perhaps the most desirable skill for an exhibition professional to have, and also the most difficult to teach or learn because it depends on a willingness to experiment. I encourage you to think of

this class as a workshop or a sandbox—try new approaches, new ideas, and new skills. At the same time, creativity requires work and revision—do not become discouraged if you do not succeed immediately, remember that like anything else, this is a process.

GROUPS:

Exhibition planning and production is a collaborative effort, and one that requires many different actors. Based on your interests and (to a lesser degree) your experience, I will be dividing you up into three teams:

● **Audience:** research audience, meet needs of audience. Maintain connection with the Tarble community

● **Curatorial / Interpretive:** research, designate, and explain themes and ideas of exhibit

● **Collections/Artifacts:** select and coordinate objects that best illustrate themes

*While you will all be working on some aspects within these three areas, it will be the responsibility of each group to coordinate and report on activity. Groups will be designated after the first class meeting.

ASSIGNMENTS and GRADING

Because this course combines theory with practice, students will complete several kinds of assignments, which will all be due to me via email prior to that days' class meeting, or posted on the appropriate platform. Please use this format for all submitted documents: **lastname.assignment name.doc**

● **Planning / Practical:**

1 Group Digital Platform Assignment (15%)

4 Individual: Audience, Theme, Artifact, and Design Memos (10% each: total 40%)

1 Group: Audience, Exhibit, Artifact presentation, draft, and final (15%)

● **Reflective / Critical:**

1 Exhibition Review (10%)

2 Reflect/Respond/Review discussion leading and blogs (5% each: total 10%)

● **Participation:**

This includes class attendance, preparedness, participation, initiative, and teamwork (10%)

DIGITAL PLATFORMS:

This course will use social media both as a means of keeping our conversation going outside of the classroom and generating a record of our process. You will be responsible for posting to and checking the course WordPress, and all of our exhibit records will be kept on one of the EIU wikis. Please do take advantage of CATS training while you are here, and of the institutional subscriptions to sites like Lynda.com. Digital literacy is an important skill to acquire while you are here

Platforms to Know: WordPress, Omeka, Dreamweaver, InDesign, Photoshop, Google SketchUp

REQUIRED TEXTS:

The following books are available at Textbook Rental:

Barry Lord and Maria Piacente, *Manual of Museum Exhibitions*, Second Edition (2014)

Kathleen MacLean, *Planning for People in Museum Exhibitions* (1993)

*Other readings will be available as PDF's on D2L

OTHER RESOURCES:

Nina Simon's Museum 2.0, <http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/>

National Council on Public History's History@Work: <http://publichistorycommons.org/>

Miriam Posner, How Did They Make That? <http://miriamposner.com/blog/how-did-they-make-that/>

ExhibiTricks <http://blog.orselli.net/>

Jaspar Visser, The Museum of the Future <http://themuseumofthefuture.com/>

Center for the Future of Museums, <http://futureofmuseums.blogspot.com/>

The Uncataloged Museum <http://uncatalogedmuseum.blogspot.com/>

Ed Rodley, Thinking About Museums, <http://exhibitdev.wordpress.com/>

Dirt Directory for finding digital tools, <http://dirtdirectory.org/>

Museum Computing Network, <http://www.mcn.edu/>

Museums and the Web, <http://www.museumsandtheweb.com/>

Museum Making, <http://museummaking.com/about>

ADDITIONAL POLICIES AND INFORMATION

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism—either intentionally or unintentionally passing off someone else’s work as your own will not be tolerated, and will result in a zero grade for the assignment and/or the course. I will also file a Notification of Academic Misconduct Form with the Office of Student Standards, which will become part of your file at Eastern. Please see EIU’s Student Code of Conduct for more information on plagiarism and other kinds of academic dishonesty. Students are responsible for adhering to this code.

(<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>)

Disability Services

EIU is committed to the provision of equal access and opportunity to all campus programs and services for students with documented qualifying disabilities. Please feel free to both talk to me and/or contact the Office of Disability Services <http://www.eiu.edu/disabltly/index.php>, they will approve and arrange accommodation.

Student Success Center:

I encourage you to take advantage of the resources offered by EIU’s Student Success Center. See <http://www.eiu.edu/success/> for more information.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

* I reserve the right to make changes in the syllabus as I deem appropriate as the semester progresses but I will always give you prior notice and attempt to lessen or maintain, not add to, your workload.

Week 1: 8/25: introductions: course expectations, objectives

handouts: exhibition review, digital platform assignment, blog sheet

-go over syllabus, course procedures, and course expectations in detail

-sign up to lead discussion for two class meetings

-sign up to post on class blog

Kathleen McLean, “Manifesto for the (r)Evolution of Museum Exhibitions,” *The Exhibitionist* Spring 2010

Allan Teller, “Assessing Excellence in Exhibitions: Three Approaches” *The Exhibitionist*, Fall 2007

Robert Archibald and Nicola Longford, “How do We Look? Some Thoughts on Critical Reviews of Museum Exhibits,” in “Critiquing Exhibits: Meanings and Realities,” *The Exhibitionist*, Fall, 2000

Matthew G. Hyland, “Exhibit Review: Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War and Lincoln Slept Here by Emily Ruby; Nick Ciotola,” *The Public Historian*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Summer 2010), pp. 157-160

Richard J. W. Harker, “Exhibit Review: Propaganda: Power and Persuasion by Jude England; Ian Cooke,” *The Public Historian*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (November 2013), pp. 103-107

Stephanie Hurter, “Review: Designing Tomorrow: America’s World’s Fairs of the 1930s,” *The Public Historian*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Spring, 2011), pp. 163-167

Kathleen McLean, “Looking at Exhibitions: One Approach to Criticism,” Appendix A in *Planning for People in Museum Exhibitions* (163-166)

Week 2: 9/1: what is a history exhibition? What is the history of museum exhibits?

due: Brief statement regarding interests, past experience, and goals, and indicating which group(s) you would like to join.

Gary Kulik, “Designing the Past: History-Museum Exhibitions from Peale to the Present” in Warren Leon and Roy Rosenzweig, *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 1-39

Joseph J. Corn, “Tools, Technologies, and Contexts: Interpreting the History of American Technics,” in

Warren Leon and Roy Rosenzweig, *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 237-261

□ Robert Rydell, "The Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893," in *All The World's A Fair: Visions of Empire At American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 38-71

□ William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), excerpts

Week 3: 9/8 how will we plan our exhibition?

due: exhibition review

handout: audience memo assignments

in class: exhibition review presentation

□ Lord & Piacente, "Introduction," "The Purpose of Museum Exhibitions," "Where do Exhibition Ideas Come From?" and "Measuring Success," 1-56

□ Special Issue of *The Exhibitionist* "Formalizing Exhibition Development," Spring 2002

Week 4: 9/15: thinking about the digital

bring to class: an example from the "digital museum" (website, interactive, etc.)

□ Angelina Russo, "The Rise of the 'Media Museum: Creating Interactive Cultural Experience Through Social Media,'" in Elisa Giaccardi, ed. *Heritage and Social Media: Understanding Heritage in a Participatory Culture*. (Routledge, 2012)

□ Lianne McTavish, "Visiting the Virtual Museum: Art and Experience Online," in Janet Marstine, ed. *New Museum Theory and Practice: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 226-246

□ Lord & Piacente, "Virtual Experiences," 147-164, "Multimedia," 339-358

Week 5: 9/22 publics, audiences, communities

due: digital platform group assignments, presentations

in class: go over audience interview details

handout: theme memo assignment

□ Wayne LaBar, "The Public Is a Team Member," *The Exhibitionist*, Fall 2009

□ McLean, *Planning for People in Museum Exhibitions*, chapters 1-7 (1-102)

Week 6: 9/29 finding the story

due: audience memo

□ Beverly Serrell, "Part 1," *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach* (Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press, 1996), 1-36

□ Richard Rabinowitz, "Eavesdropping at the Well: Interpretive Media in the Slavery in New York Exhibition," *The Public Historian*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (August 2013), pp. 8-45

□ Steven Lubar, "Curator as Auteur," *The Public Historian*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (February 2014), pp. 71-76

□ Leslie Bedford, "Finding the Story in History," in D. Lynn McRainey and John Russick, eds. *Connecting Kids to History with Museum Exhibitions*. (Left Coast Press: 2010) 97-116

Week 7: 10/6 audience brief presentation and workshop

in class: draft audience brief (**front end evaluation**) draft presentations + peer review

□ Lord & Piacente, "Who Is Involved in the Exhibition Process," "Preparing the Exhibition Brief," "Interpretive Planning," and "Curatorship and Content Development." 233-292

Week 8: 10/13: "what's the big idea?" –the exhibit concept

due: theme memo and presentation

handout: artifact memo guidelines

□ McLean, *Planning for People in Museum Exhibitions*, chapters 8-end (103-171)

□ Margaret Lindhauer, "From Salad Bars to Vivid Stories: Four Game Plans for Developing "Educationally Successful" Exhibitions," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 20 (2005), 41-55

Week 9: 10/20 telling stories: thinking about exhibition narratives

special guest: Angela Giacomelli, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis

- Edward T. Linenthal, "Anatomy of a Controversy," in Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, eds., *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past* (Henry Holt & Co. 1996) 1-62
- Peter Libehold, "Experiences from the Front Line: Presenting a Controversial Exhibition During the Culture Wars," *The Public Historian*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Summer, 2000), pp. 67-84
- Steven Conn, "Thinking About Museums," "Do Museums Still Need Objects," and "Museums, Public Space, and Civic Identity," in *Do Museums Still Need Objects* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010) 1-57, 197-232 (skip Chapter 5, which is also in PDF)

Week 10: 10/27 exhibition brief presentation and workshop

in class: draft exhibit brief presentation + peer review

- Lynda.com training on Google Sketch Up or a platform of your choice (check with me)

Week 11: 11/3 the object: artifacts, collections, archives

due: artifact memo

bring to class: three objects that tell a story together—be creative!

- Lord & Piacante, "Permanent Collection Displays," "Exhibitions Not Based on Collections," 121-146
- Rachel P. Maines and James J. Glynn, "Numinous Objects," in *The Public Historian* 15. 1 (Winter 1993), 8-25
- Fred Schroeder, "Designing Your Exhibits: Seven Ways to Look at an Artifact," *History News*, Vol. 31, No. 11, Nov., 1976
- Andrea Witcombe, "On the Side of the Object: an Alternative Approach to Debates About Ideas, Objects and Museum," *Museum Management and Curatorship*, Volume 16, Issue 4, 1997

Week 12: 11/10 on design

- Lord & Piacante, "Design," 293-338,
- Tom Klobe, *Exhibitions: Concept, Planning, and Design* (Alta Mira Press, 2013), selections
- Elizabeth Bogle, "What Does an Exhibit Designer Do?" *History News* 37, 1982
- Judith A. Brundin, "A Small Museum's Modern Exhibition on a Shoestring Budget," *Museum Studies Journal*

Week 13: 11/17 artifact brief presentation and workshop

in class: draft artifact brief (using Omeka) + peer review

- Lord & Piacante, "Fabrication and Installation," "Financial Planning," "Effective Exhibit Project Management," 359-395

Week 14: 11/24 NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Week 15: 12/1: exhibition spaces

- Sean Martin, "A Few Design Basics," *Big Show, Tiny Budget* (Smith and Krause, 2008), 11-25
- Pam Locker, *Exhibition Design*, Excerpts
- W. Joseph Stell, "Scenery: What and Why," and "The Design Process," in *Scenery: Design and Fabrication* (Studio City, CA: Players Press, 2001), 17-37, 51-63
- Lord & Piacante, "Exhibit Facilities," "A World of Exhibition Space," 57-120

Week 16: 12/8: design proposals presentation and workshop

due and present: individual design proposals

in class: looking forward to next semester

DUE DURING FINALS: FINAL PORTFOLIO, REFLECTION AND SELF-ASSESSMENT STATEMENTS

APPENDIX: COURSE OBJECTIVES:.....

Students will:

1. Master the theory, history, and practice of museum exhibition
2. Plan, research, and design an exhibition
3. Apply communication theory to deliver complex topics in a meaningful way to a general audience
4. Apply theory and principles to produce an exhibit with multiple points of view and levels of engagement
5. Develop and adhere to a schedule, list of materials, and exhibit budget
6. Create a design brief as a guide to exhibit development
7. Contribute as an effective member of an exhibit team
8. Practice front-end, formative and summative evaluations as guides to the exhibit development process
9. Work in a client/contractor environment to create an exhibition for an area museum
10. Practice ethical use of social media in museums
11. Design and use social media to attract new audiences
12. Design and use social media to encourage active participation in the exhibit and affiliated public programs